

**Written Testimony of Jack Waldorf, Executive Director
Western Governors' Association**

**Submitted to the United States House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
April 18, 2024**

Fiscal Year 2025 Appropriations

Chair Womack, Ranking Member Quigley, and Members of the Subcommittee, the Western Governors' Association (WGA) appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony on the appropriations and activities of the U.S. Departments of Transportation (DOT) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD). WGA is an independent organization representing the Governors of the 22 westernmost states and territories. The Association is an instrument of the Governors for bipartisan policy development, information sharing, and collective action on issues of critical importance to the western United States.

Western Governors appreciate the diverse needs the Subcommittee must balance for transportation infrastructure across the nation. In the West, the extensive distances between communities present unique challenges and the quality of surface and air transportation infrastructure and services have a profound effect on economic opportunity throughout the western United States.

Western states are linked by vast expanses of national highways and interstates that often do not correlate with population centers but serve as critical national freight and transportation routes for the nation. Investment in federal routes and in multimodal transportation networks throughout the West are critical to interstate commerce and a growing economy.

Western Governors support funding for transportation infrastructure on lands managed by federal land management agencies. This infrastructure ensures appropriate access to manage, maintain, and restore western forests and rangelands and promote recreational access to public lands.

As federal investment continues to support electric vehicle adoption, the West faces specific vehicle charging network challenges. WGA's Electric Vehicles (EV) Roadmap identified the factors limiting the expansion of western regional EV charging networks: significant distances between communities, limited existing electric grid infrastructure, and a patchwork of federal, state, and private land ownership boundaries. Western Governors appreciate the creation of EV infrastructure programs and encourage the Subcommittee to leverage state partnerships when allocating surface transportation and infrastructure funds to expand cohesive, regional EV charging networks.

In addition to surface transportation, air transport provides an essential connection for the scattered communities in the West. The Essential Air Service (EAS) and the Small Community Air Service Development Program (SCASDP) support the continued success of rural

communities by providing critical connections and infrastructure investment, alongside attracting more businesses and workers to these areas through linking these rural communities to airline hubs. Western Governors support adequate investments in these two important programs.

Like other regions of the nation, the western United States is facing a serious housing shortage. The insufficient pace of new development and high mortgage rates continue to limit individuals' ability to buy or rent a home. Western Governors appreciate the Subcommittee's attention to the shortage of affordable housing in the West and note the role of programs like the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), which assists states, territories, and localities in developing affordable housing units.

Western Governors request the federal government support state housing finance agencies and public housing authorities and request that the Subcommittee explore avenues to strengthen the services and resources provided to these organizations.

The Federal Housing Administration (FHA), which insures mortgages on single-family homes and multifamily properties made by private lenders, requires adequate resources to function effectively. Western Governors encourage the Subcommittee to continue funding FHA technology and system processing upgrades and increase the hiring of FHA state staff to improve communication and coordination between states and territories and the federal government.

On the subject of data, given the numerous federal programs, policies, and regulations directly affecting the collective states and territories, Western Governors encourage the Subcommittee to direct Congress and federal agencies to improve their internal processes and coordinate with states and territories on federal policies and procedures, as well as integrate state and territorial data into federal programs, including for policymaking purposes.

Western Governors recognize the enormous challenge you have in balancing competing funding priorities and appreciate the difficulty of the decisions the Subcommittee must make. These recommendations are offered in a spirit of cooperation and respect, and WGA is prepared to assist you as the Subcommittee discharges its critical and challenging responsibilities.